

in goodness a superior man to any king, noble;
higher or other plutocrat of these islands.

It is in "Piers Ploughman" that Langland finds the hope of salvation for a godless, anti-Christian, suffering world. It is in him that Langland places the seeds of right; the will to do good, the desire to be guided by reason and conscience, the striving for improvement, the hope of better things, while the moralist lashes the debased and worldly priests and monks, and the oppressive, luxurious and degenerate higher classes of society. That the monk and his brethren were not what he is, after all, a person of some importance is a fact which stands out clearly in the heart of the dreamer among the monks of the Black Hills, himself a monk and a friend of the worlded and the worldly. It is not without reason that it is that there were forces at work even in the face of a heartless conventionalism, which led to a social revolution.

It is, in a determined, if despairing, attempt at a solution on behalf of equity. Every highway in England was a highway to the poorest-minded men who preached righteousness, the rich and the powerful, the nobility who denounced the pride and selfishness of the higher orders, and demanded that the King should give them justice. The King gave justice to the poor man, reason and conscience were not altogether melted by the greed of the priest, and the monk was threatening to crush the life out of the heavy burden of this world. It was a beginning, to feel the potency, the power, the earnest of future amendment and of the uprooting of the life of the world.

III.

We pass to some later incidents in the reign of Edward III. which bore on the evolution of the English Constitution. After the Peace of Brétigny, which was concluded between England and France in 1360, the increasing amount of useful legislation bears witness to the growing power of the Commons. They became ever more alert in their efforts to control the administration of King and Council. In 1366 a demand made successfully for the removal of a grievance connected with the procedure of the law courts is significant of the development of the national spirit so far as the power of a sovereign is concerned.

In a later epoch, as is concerned, the language was still French, but French had never been the mother tongue of Englishmen, and was becoming more and more a vernacular of the Norman Conquest. It is true that the higher classes on both sides of the Channel still spoke the same language, but English had asserted its vitality as the vernacular of the masses and as the medium of the new literature in which, through Langland and Chaucer, the national spirit was seeking expression. The Commons, therefore, petitioned and Edward consented, that trials in court should be hence-

born, at a time when Edward was striving to make his countrymen understand that the English nation really should have shown itself so antagonistic to the French conquest of England, which had been accomplished 200 years before Mr. Mackintosh thinks that the fact should have sufficed to convince him of the futility of seeking to unite the crown of England, in which case many a perfect soldier would have died, with that of France, which was becoming generally conscious of its nationality, and had suffered so much in self-defence. Our author points out that the victories won on French soil by English arms, although they conquered the English national spirit, had been, in reality, no more than a defeat, as the sword of ultimate victory was affected. There only remained deeper and more irreconcilable the separation between the two peoples. If Norman-French had been the language of the masses of the English population, history might have taken another turn, though the example of Scotland was proving under Edward's eyes that even the loss of the language could not make conquest palatable to a high-spirited people.

In the later and tragical years of Edward's life, one of the most noticeable phenomena was the appearance of an anti-clerical feeling which showed itself not only in a determined reaction against the jurisdiction of the Pope,

to reform the practical abuses of an effective religious life. There were ample grounds for the widespread feeling of dissatisfaction, grounds discoverable in the nascent English literature, as well as in the official records of the age. The first consideration to the mind of the reformer was the privileges in deference to the papal dogma of the absolute independence, and even superiority, of the Church in relation to the State, the spectacle of a series of worldly prelates engrossed in the pursuit of political functions to the neglect of their episcopal duties, the deteriorated and clerical character of the royal council, the unscrupulous courts in calling offenders to account, their obstinacy in resisting the efforts of the civil courts to do so, and, finally, the overgrown wealth of the clerical estates, were abuses which no high-spirited nation could submit to without protest, and without efforts at reformation. In the second half of the fourteenth century the struggle against clerical politicians acquired reinforced force. The Lords and Commons insisted that all offices of State should be henceforth filled by laymen, the argument advanced in support of the demand being that clerical politicians are not amenable to the civil law, and civil law could not be carried into effect by administration. At first Edward seemed to regard the demand as an encroachment on his

not in the matter as should seem best to himself with the advice of his council, but he subsequently complied and submitted laymen or ecclesiastics in the offices of Chancellor and Treasurer, to the extent of 1572 the king had embodied a large scheme of ecclesiastical reform. The Commons complained of the continued distraint of the public money to Rome; of the exactions of the ecclesiastical courts in testamentary causes; of the dissoluteness of many of the clergy, who, though they might be made to read a lesson in a church, were in their ordinaries to keep a concubine of the scandal and evil thereof; and of the remissness of the Church courts in dealing with immoral priests. The language of the petitions is noticeably strong. Clerical greed, hypocrisy and immorality were evidently intolerable scandals and must be dealt with. The king's answer being was asked not only to prohibit the drift of English treasure Rowenard, but to put a stop to the extortions of the ecclesiastical courts by subjecting them to the control of the civil judges. In reply, Edward promised to adopt the suggestion should the prelates consent to waive in their duties, and in regard to the Justices of Assize, the king gave promise of a measure of severity, the realization of cases of flagrant immorality and inflicted heavy fines on delinquents. Moreover, the ultimate, immoral priest should be deprived

We must close our notice of this book with reference to the proceedings of the Parliament of 1574. The members of the Council, in the leadership of their Speaker, Sir Peter de Mare, did not hesitate to arraign Lord Lauder, Chancellor and Privy Counsellor, and he was committed to the Tower. The king himself was forced to put away his constant dislike of Alice Pereres, and Parliament was to provide an acquittal of the accused on grounds of misgovernment by corrupt Ministers and counsellors. The king was to be elected for the future and ten or twelve Lords to the council, who should be consulted in all the affairs of state. The king was to be of no assistance in important business should be determined in matters of less importance. The king was not to be a member of the Council. Four of these additional councillors, who were to be in perpetual residence at court, were to be the Chancellor, Treasurer and other officers of state. All orders issued by the king were to be faithfully and expeditiously executed by the Lord Chancellor. All of the king's orders were to be granted and omitted in a number of ordinances, and appointed a special committee of advice. The king was to have a reform achieved by this Parliament during its session of ten weeks ample justified in the satisfaction of the king. The king had read a lesson to misgovernment officials and established as a precedent the right of the king to demand the removal of his officers from their stewardship. It had shown, long before the death of the Lord Chancellor, how the Reform Parliament of 1574, when English

land, especially if that government be corrupt.